

**Saint Joseph's Paternal Vigilance Over Those Amongst His Clients Whose Salvation Is In Danger.**  
By Rev. Patrignani, S.J.

Saint Joseph may be compared to the good father in the Gospel, who loves those among his children who obey, and are an honour to him, but whose tender and compassionate heart also yearns for the return of that ungrateful child who had abandoned and dishonoured the best of parent. The meaning of this is, that if he grants favours to the just to enable them to advance in perfection, neither does he withhold his paternal care and solicitude from poor sinners. Of this, we here give a very ancient but authentic example: it is a quotation from that famous work on St. Joseph, written by Père Isidore de L'Isle, and which the author dedicated to Pope Adrian VI., about the year 1522. A Venetian gentleman, who had acquired the pious custom of praying every day before an image of St. Joseph, but who seemed otherwise extremely careless with regard to the most indispensable duties of religion, happened to be attacked with a serious illness, and seemed in imminent danger, not only of death, but also, what was infinitely more deplorable, of eternal death! Happily for him, at those periods of the sickness when his case appeared most desperate, a heavenly physician, even St. Joseph himself, came to his relief. The sick man distinctly saw a personage enter his chamber, whose countenance bore a striking resemblance to that of the image which he was in the habit of saluting daily. Such an unexpected apparition was cheering to him as a sunbeam, which suddenly dispels the gloom of some darksome prison into which it penetrates. He then saw clearly and distinctly all the sins, in the habit of which he had so long almost unconsciously lived; he conceived the deepest horror of them, as well as the most lively contrition: but this did not satisfy his fervour; he made a general confession of his whole life, with abundance of tears. But a most singular grace that his generous protector bestowed on him was, that, just at that precious moment when the priest had pronounced the last word of the form of the absolution, the fortunate penitent gave up his soul into the hands of its Creator. It may well be supposed that St. Joseph failed not to accompany that soul, so highly favoured by him, to the feet of the Sovereign Judge, to be its defender, if necessary, at that dread tribunal.

The following example we hope will serve to impart courage to those weak and timid souls who, after having had the misfortune of falling into some grievous sin, yield to the dangerous temptations of absenting themselves from the tribunal of penance, rather than undergo the confusion of confessing it: it will, moreover, show them that in St. Joseph's intercession they will be sure to find a powerful means of overcoming this base, this pernicious shame. The person to whom this occurred told it herself to Père Barri, when he was writing a life of St. Joseph. This person had the misfortune to commit a great sin contrary to a vow which she had made, and found it impossible to conquer the false shame which sealed her lips at the sacred tribunal of penance. For a long time she lived at enmity with God, and a prey to that most grievous of all torments, remorse of conscience, the inevitable consequence of sin. This unhappy creature knew well that her sufferings would endure until the thorn which lacerated her should have been extracted, and that her wound would never heal until she had discovered it to the spiritual physician. She at length thought of calling on St. Joseph to assist her weakness, and invoked him to enable her to overcome the repugnance which seemed indomitable. For this intention she recited during nine days the hymn and prayer of the saint, after which she felt so strong and courageous, that rising superior to herself, she hastened to cast herself at the feet of her confessor, and made her accusation without the least difficulty. From that happy moment, she always regarded St. Joseph as her liberator, entrusted him with the care of her soul, and always wore his image about her, and even at night, as a preventative against bad dreams. She moreover acknowledged that St. Joseph was pleased to recompense her fidelity and devotion to him by extraordinary graces.

The same writer mentions two singular conversions, both of which are attributed to St. Joseph's intercession. The first was that of a young man at Lyons, who had led a very edifying life, and had even resolved to quit the world, in order the better to secure his eternal salvation: but afterwards, his parents having opposed his vocation, he was so weak as to renounce it. The world soon cooled his youthful fervour and piety, and he gradually abandoned all his former holy practices; the absence of all restraint,

the allurements of pleasure, and the force of bad example, made him forget his duties, and he abandoned himself to all the excesses of the most licentious life. But all that was not yet sufficient to gratify the violence of his passions; like another prodigal, he quitted his father's house, buckled on the sword, and enlisted as a soldier. In his new profession, he cared not to acquire any other glory than that of being cited as the most shameless libertine of the entire regiment. All this was permitted by Divine Justice, to punish both the parents and the child: the latter for having, through mistaken compliance, closed his ears against the voice of God; the former, for having, in their blind affection, dared to oppose the designs of heaven. However, the parents were now inconsolable on seeing their son, whom they refused to give to God, in the hands of the devil; they wrote him innumerable letters, bathed in their tears, exhorting him to a change of life, and to return to his parental home, where he would be received with open arms. At last, seeing that all their invitations, all their entreaties, were not capable of softening the obdurate heart of their son, they had now recourse to a more noble, a more efficacious means, which was that of invoking St. Joseph; and they implored him to take their unfortunate child under his protection, and to save him from perdition. The saint had compassion on them; he inspired the young soldier with such lively feelings of regret and piety, that becoming an altered man, he quitted the army and returned to his parents, of whom he humbly asked forgiveness for the anguish he had cost them. He thenceforth entered on a life worthy of his former fervour, and so seriously and perseveringly, that we may apply to him the words addressed in the Gospel to the prodigal son: "He was dead, and is come to life; he was lost, and is found."

The second conversion which was effected by St. Joseph's intercession, took place at Paris. A religious of the Society of Jesus had a near relative, who for many years was a disgrace, no less to the name of Christian, than to the priesthood, with which dignity he was invested. This zealous religious having employed, though in vain, the most kind and paternal remonstrances, together with the most awful and serious warnings, at length begged of God, that if all other means failed, it would please Him to send this wretched man a grievous illness, which might serve to reclaim him from his wanderings; for in truth there is not a more effectual means than tribulation for restoring reason to those whom vice has deprived of it, according to this passage of Holy Writ: "Tribulation giveth understanding." In order to neglect nothing on his part to secure the efficacy of this remedy, he had recourse to St. Joseph, and asked his friends to say two novenas together, one of Masses, the other of Communions, in his honour. The favour so vigorously demanded was not refused; the unworthy minister fell sick, and appeared not to have many moments to live. It was only then he became sensible of all the disorders of his life; he sincerely detested them, and hastened to be purified in the sacrament of penance. In order to render this miracle more striking, St. Joseph added another extraordinary favour to it, for the priest was quite suddenly restored to perfect health, and rose from his bed with a perfect determination to live thenceforth in a manner conformable to his saintly character. He devoted himself with zeal and perseverance to works of piety, and seemed to have but one object in life, namely, to promote, by word and example, the glory of his Divine Master in all things.